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ABSTRACT

A training program designed to enhance the career development of undergraduate psychology majors is described. The class involved 11 hours of didactic lectures and discussions which attempted to give students external information relevant to work and school decisions. The sessions were designed to give students an understanding of decision making models, individual attributes and limitations, career options within the helping professions, and the way these variables relate to decisions about graduate school programs. (Author)

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# Didactic Group Training in Career Development for Psychology Undergraduates

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A paper presented as part of a Symposium entitled: "A Career Decision-Making Course for Psychology Undergraduates" at the American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, Canada, 1978.

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This paper describes a didactic approach to decision making. Eleven sessions have been designed to give students an understanding of decision-making models, individual attributes and limitations, career options within the helping professions, and the way these variables relate to decisions about graduate school programs (Montague, 1978).

The Didactic/Informational section involved eleven hours of lectures and discussions which were utilized in an attempt to give students external information relevant to work and school decisions. The group focused specifically on the content of applied psychology--what it is that helping professions do and how graduate programs are geared towards these various careers. The differences between clinical psychology, counseling psychology, guidance, rehabilitation and social work were stressed, and comparisons drawn to graduate programs in each area. An introduction to some of the more recent career opportunities for psychologists were given, and the implications of these new career possibilities for graduation preparation were considered.

Table 1 presents a summary of the Didactic/Informational program. An overview of the eleven week process included a focus on the decision-making process--how individual styles affected the decision-making process and the discussion of various models that attempted to explain the decision-making process.

Following the decision-making lectures, information was presented which covered what the helping professions are, how helping professionals function in each profession, and in what institutional and social contexts helping professionals work.

Job market implications involving the availability of jobs, salaries, and the demand for jobs in certain subject areas were discussed.

The group was made aware of alternate careers in various professions. For example, in psychology there are other areas besides clinical and counseling such as forensic or environmental psychology.

A presentation on the kinds of preparation needed for various careers and the types of programs available were given to acquaint the group with the necessary information needed for career decision making. The various types of tests required for graduate school admittance were discussed. Students were

Table 1

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| Week One | Syllabus presentation<br>Course overview<br>Expectations clarification<br>Course requirements<br>Introduction of trainer(s) |
| Week Two | General goal of class: to decide what kind of career and what kind of graduate program students want.<br><br>Progression of ideas that will be covered in ensuing lectures.<br><br>Initial focus on decision-making process. |
| Week Three | Reiteration of course goals and focus on decision-making process--decision making is orderly sequence of events--although individual differences influence what variables are present--styles and effect of styles on decision-making process. |
| Week Four | Various models exist to explain how decision making occurs.<br><br>A specific model has been developed to explain college decision-making.<br><br>Attempts to explain decision-making process (Super, Tiedeman, Janis and Mann).<br><br>Shortcomings of these attempts. |
| Week Five | Reiteration of need for model of decision-making process.<br><br>Explication of Harren model. |
| Week Six | Reiteration of course objectives and how model fits the objectives.<br><br>Now that a specific problem has been confronted, what else is needed to make a decision |
| Week Seven | What are the helping professions? What does a helping professional do in each profession? Who are the clients? Where does the helper work? |
| Week Eight | Job market implications |
| Week Nine | Alternative careers for psychologists |

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|---|---|
| **Week Ten** | What kind of preparation is needed for these various careers?<br>What kinds of programs are available?<br>M.A./Ph.D. |
| **Week Eleven** | Types of academic programs<br>APA/Non-APA<br>Requirements |

encouraged to prepare for the Graduate Record Exam and the Miller's Analogy Test. Often these two test scores are asked for in entrance requirements. Information on college courses needed to meet graduate school admittance was also given. Finally, the facilitators discussed the procedures of becoming a licensed psychologist, licensed social worker, etc.

At the end of the eleventh session, the goal was that students would have formulated specific ideas from the information given them as to which direction they will take upon graduation.

## Group Process

This group of students met for two 1-hour sessions per week for six weeks.

In the first session, the students were given a class syllabus, an overview of the course, clarification of expectations, course requirements and were introduced to the group co-facilitators, Vince Harren and Bernita Patterson.

Week two was devoted to the general goals of the class, finding out and generating the kinds of careers and graduate programs the students are planning to pursue. The students were also given a general overview of the decision-making process.

A lecture on the decision-making process was continued in the third week. The different decision-making styles were presented and the students were made aware of how individual differences influence the variables present within the various styles as well as the effect of the various styles on the decision-making process.

The fourth week was devoted to a lecture on how various models attempt to explain how decision making occurs (i.e., Super, Tiedeman, and Janis and Mann). The shortcomings of these models were pointed out and how the models were integrated in the Harren career decision-making model.

In the fifth week the students were given more insight into the test each of them took in the first week of class, the Assessment of Career Decision Making (ACDM). An explication of the ACDM was given by the author (Harren, 1976). This discussion was integrated into the Harren model of career decision making.

A reiteration of the course objectives and how they fit into the Harren model began the sixth week. Students were previously asked to think about what may be needed after a specific problem has been confronted. This task generated information seeking questions from the students. A list of helping professions was formulated from these questions, and the listing guided the facilitators in gathering information needed to meet the goals of the students taking the course.

The helping professions that students expressed interests in were defined first in the seventh week, in terms of what they are, what a helping professional does in each profession, who are the clients and where (geographically and internal environment) does the helper work. The helping professions receiving the most interest were clinical and counseling psychology, guidance programs, rehabilitation counseling and social work. The book, Career Opportunities for Psychologists, by Paul J. Woods was used as a valuable source in carrying out these tasks. The book was not required but as a result of its valuable sources, many students purchased the book. Therefore, for future classes the book will be available as an optional text.

Job market implications were discussed in the eighth week. This discussion included the salary ranges within the past five years for each field and how these ranges vary by geographic region. Analysis of the salary ranges of men vs. women and vice versa in the helping professions were presented and discussed. A projection into the 1980's was reviewed covering future salary ranges and prospective percentages of job openings in that helping profession. The job market discussion seemed to have generated more class participation than any

other class session. The students were more involved and showed great concern over the job market implications. It appeared that these implications are important to these students' plans for future graduate school and career preparation.

The ninth week was spent giving the students information about alternative job opportunities in which their psychological skills could be utilized in the even that they were not successful in getting admitted to a graduate program of their choice. This period was also spent clarifying information students had heard and were not clear on (i.e., is it true that a rehabilitation counselor can counsel in a prison system?)

The tenth week began by distinguishing the difference between two specialties within psychology (clinical and counseling) since the majority of the students showed interest in those two areas. Rehabilitation counseling, social work and guidance programs were distinguished and also other areas of interest were included. This discussion led to the kinds of preparation needed for various helping profession careers. The facilitators endeavored to inform the students of the kinds of programs available to prepare them for their prospective career. The American Psychological Association publishes a book each year describing programs available for training persons in the helping professions, mainly in psychology professions. It's called Graduate Studies in Psychology published by the American Psychological Association. This book gives the student the requirements he or she must meet to be admitted into these programs and the program criteria. Finally, a mini-lecture and discussion was given concerning how much and the types of preparation needed for the students' prospective careers (i.e., certificate, M.A., Ph.D., or license).

The eleventh session involved a lecture on the types of academic programs and the basic requirements of these programs. It is important for students to

know the difference between APA approved and non-APA programs. The students are encouraged to apply to APA and non-APA approved programs. The facilitators suggested to the students that if selected only by non-APA programs, one would be wise to matriculate in that program for one or two years and then re-apply to an APA approved program if desirable. After presenting the students with various materials concerning academic programs, the facilitators separated the class members into groups (dividing the professions of interest). The class members were able to review informational materials and ask questions.

Activities of the tenth and eleventh sessions culminated the semester.

Overall, class evaluations and response suggest that the class was very helpful and that it should be offered at the freshman or sophomore level. The students felt that offering the course earlier in their college years would alleviate some of the mistakes made in their career planning. They would also like more personal accounts of the helping professions (speakers from various helping profession areas).

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